

COOPERATIVE: A CREATIVE SCREENWRITING THESIS

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ABSTRACT

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TITLE

Cooperative: A Creative Screenwriting Thesis

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ABSTRACT

Residing at an international student housing cooperative (or co-op) for two years has been—more often than not—akin to being on a nonstop reality television show. Living with sixty people from more than a dozen countries and walks of life has created a never-ending stream of candidly bizarre yet hysterical circumstances. For an aspiring television writer, there could be no better environment for raw inspiration.

Cooperative is a half-hour pilot script I first conceptualized in Fall 2017 and later developed in Spring 2018 in an undergraduate screenwriting thesis course modeled after a television writers room, in which students refine ideas, dialogue, and plot constructs through group feedback and class participation. Through three outlines, a treatment, and several iterations of “notes” on my script, I produced a first draft that allowed me to experiment and better understand scripted narrative development, and will ultimately serve as a creative sample for writing positions in the entertainment industry.

This thesis is composed of the thirty-page script, addenda comprised of initial draft documents, and a treatise that details my experience writing (and rewriting) the script and serious questions I engaged with during the creative process. Anecdotes from my real life experiences at the Laurel House Co-op in UT’s West Campus, notes from my summer in the University of Texas Semester in Los Angeles program, and feedback on my work from screenplay competitions and writing festivals.

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INTRODUCTION

Co-op Backstory

After living for two years on-campus at Whitis Court, my roommate and I elected to make the move to West Campus in search of a larger space and indeed, a larger sense of independence. Instead of signing a traditional apartment lease with one of the major housing companies in the neighborhood, we decided to try out “cooperative living” by moving to a small, quirky, and somewhat obscure College Houses co-op: Laurel House.

Unlike a traditional apartment or rented home situation, cooperative living is designed to offer affordable housing to residents by creating a system of shared economic participation and democratic member control. For members of College Houses—the parent organization of seven West Campus-area co-ops—reduced rent is offered for residents in exchange for several hours of “labor” every week. This can include building maintenance, cooking meals, cleaning shared spaces, planning social events, and leading community outreach efforts. While people from a wide range of backgrounds and ages can live at co-ops, they can be described as having a somewhat alternative or countercultural feel, with many members being actively involved in progressive political organizations, underground indie bands, and other uniquely Austin scenes.

Laurel House is located in a apartment-style building known as the Super Co-op, which is also home to the Halstead and Nueces co-op communities. Laurel is home to sixty residents and is unique among other co-ops due to its composition of nearly 50% international students. While not being as eccentric as other co-ops like 21st Street or Pearl, Laurel is characterized on its website as having “a mature but exciting atmosphere with many opportunities to put the books aside and have fun.” For many UT students, including non-co-op members, Pearl and 21st Street are synonymous with psychedelia, fire-breathers, and bacchanalian splendor. Annual events like

Pearl's XXYYZZ (music event) and 21st's MF100 (a beer bike competition held in the afternoon, usually accompanied by a series of M80 fireworks and police sirens) and a long history dating back to the 1970s have helped create recognizable cultures in each house. Conversely, there is a perception that Laurel's defining characteristic is its lack of a strong party culture, being jokingly called "Laid-back Laurel." For me, however, Laurel seemed to be the most ideal co-op for me to grow as an individual while still preserving (some of) my academic and professional sensibilities.

As someone who grew up as an only-child in a relatively small-town, I was not entirely prepared to begin living in a world occupied by clothing-optional, labor-loving, and compost-frenzied hippies (or so it seemed to me). However, I recognized that from a social angle, this experience would expose me to people who could enrich my own perspective on life and give me a home environment, not just another place to live. Within the first few weeks of living at Laurel, I was elected House Historian, an officer position responsible for chronicling quotidian life at the co-op through photos, videos, and other recordings. This, perhaps more than any other event, marked the start of my idea for *Cooperative* because it allowed me see the comedic potential and entertainment value that cooperative living organically produces.

Screenwriting Backstory

The decision to pursue a television pilot as a creative thesis was an easy one. Though I had considered pursuing *Cooperative* as a *Dazed and Confused* style film, my strong inclination to work in television motivated me to frame my idea as a television pilot instead. I reasoned that my daily experiences at Laurel could give birth to new storylines and episode ideas, and I didn't want to cut myself off from a stream of ideas if I limited myself to a closed narrative like a film.

As a screenwriting-track student in the Radio-Television-Film program, I had taken classes like “Narrative Strategies,” “Introduction to Screenwriting,” and “Introduction to Image and Sound,” where I first gained exposure to the effect that carefully-crafted scripts could have on production efforts and visual storytelling. Despite not being an official concentration within the Radio-Television-Film major, the screenwriting track enabled me to focus my storytelling interests and gain valuable skills needed for creating television dramas and comedies.

In the RTF 368S Thesis Screenwriting Course, veteran screenwriting students (or those who had taken at least two screenwriting courses) develop either a full-length, ninety-page feature screenplay, a thirty-minute television comedy, or an hour-long television drama. While not all students would work in the same medium or within the same genre, each would be expected to become familiar with and invested in every project in the class and provide constructive feedback on narrative structures and character development, offer creative input and suggestions, and engage generously yet critically with one another.

The Marriage of the Two into a TV Show

Before coming into the thesis course, I already had an idea of the project I wanted to develop. In my “Introduction to Screenwriting” course, I proposed an idea for a television pilot and *Friends*-esque sitcom situated at an Austin-area co-op. Based on my personal experiences living at the Laurel House Co-op in UT’s West Campus neighborhood.

The initial logline, or premise, that I gave for the series pitch –which was eventually given the title *Cooperative*–was as follows:

After moving to the big city, a reserved smalltowner struggles to navigate college life as a member of Holly Haus, an co-operative housing community whose eccentric personalities keep it perpetually on the brink of chaos.

While I knew that I wanted the show to take place in Austin, I understood that from a “selling” perspective I could not restrict the locality of the pitch to potential network buyers. For this reason, I intentionally kept the series’ descriptors (such as “big city,” “smalltowner”) vague so that, theoretically, the show could take place anywhere.

When I pitched the idea in the introductory course, I was glad to hear positive responses from classmates; many of them were avid fans of shows like *Friends*, *Parks and Recreation*, *Community*, and *The Office*, and *That 70s Show*, which helped me frame *Cooperative* as an NBC-style half-hour comedy. Though I didn’t develop my pitch into anything substantive in the introductory screenwriting course, I received valuable responses from my classmates—including ideas for model shows (*Portlandia*) and character archetypes they’d like to see represented—that helped shape my idea of the project as I moved into the semester-long thesis writing workshop.

SHAPING THE STORY

Generating Ideas

Before the start of the screenwriting thesis course, I stopped by the UT Co-op Art Store and bought a red Moleskine notebook. I remember being struck by the fact that its verso pages were lined while the recto pages were blank. Borrowing from Steinbeck’s style of journal-keeping, I decided that I would use the lined pages to chart detailed ideas and plot maps for my script, while the blank pages would be reserved for bursts of inspiration, anecdotes, scribbles, and other acts of penmanship that I could mine when I needed inspiration (or just a break). I resolved to

treat the journal as the heart of my creative process, and even wrote “**This Should Always Be By Your Side Always!**” on it in bold letters, with special emphasis on the letters T-H-E-S-I-S.

To help aid with the generation of raw dialogue and potential comedy bits in the show that I would eventually write, I started an open Google Doc form titled “Best of Laurel – Quotes” for members of my co-op to contribute to on a rolling basis. The document—updated in an entirely voluntary and consensual manner—allows house residents to add random, often out-of-context quotes from other members for our own amusement and entertainment. In this way, not only was I dutifully discharging my responsibilities as preserver of the house’s culture, but also developing an ear for dialogue and the ability to write the way people actually talk.

Another measure I took in my combined role as Historian and upcoming thesis student was to kick-off a web-series based at the co-op, appropriately titled “Laurelite Latenite” (with members of the house being known as Laurelites). As a one-man camera-operator, video-editor, interviewer, production manager, and producer, I had a unique perspective on the subtle and overt happenings that comprised life at our co-op, which ranged from our semesterly “Labor Holiday” workdays to our cupcake eating competitions and mass road trips across the U.S. The series, available on YouTube, has spanned three seasons so far and in a sense is a miniaturized (and more sensationalized) version of my idea for *Cooperative*.

“Shitty First Drafts” – Getting it All on Paper

In the first couple of thesis workshop classes, held on Thursday afternoons in three-hour sessions, Professor McCreery gave several suggestions for how to make the most of our writers-workshop environment and for developing our pilots and features.

First, she encouraged us to get over any sense of perfectionism we might have had for our projects, and invoked Anne Lamott by urging us to get through our “shitty first draft” phase. By

producing a rough draft—despite being bad, unrealized, and, well, *shitty*—we would have something to build from and refine, rather than stressing to perfect every detail chronologically and risk not producing anything. Additionally, she emphasized that the writing process, especially in creative pursuits like screenwriting, is rewriting, and that at multiple points throughout the class we would be workshopping plots, dialogue, and other story elements. No story would be immune to the critical eye (or pen).

Second, Professor McCreery suggested we pursue projects we could agonize with, or—in other words—ideas worth struggling with. After one or two weeks of brainstorming, we would begin developing stories all the way to completion (or at least the first-draft state), so there would be no opportunity to switch ideas or to go from pilot-writing to feature-writing. She likened it a bit to being in a relationship with your idea, and to not throw away all of its potential just because a “sexy” new idea comes up that you’d rather pursue. For me, this advice would become especially relevant in the middle of the semester when I began to radically modify the premise of my pilot instead of trying to make the elements that I set-up in the treatment bloom. The mark of good screenwriters, she suggested, is not always having “gold” ideas every time they sit down to write, but rather being able to struggle with bad ideas and reshape them until they work.

The last suggestion we were given as a class was to keep in mind what we were setting out to accomplish. Despite each person in the class being a hardworking student with good ideas for films and television projects, the reality was that—at best—the works we would create in the class would lead us to introductory positions in a professional writers room or development company. One of the lines that stuck with me was, “scripts get you jobs, occasionally money.” While we would all treat our own work as if we were actually going to see it through to production,

Professor McCreery reminded us that the thesis course was structured in a way to let us explore the process of pitching, developing, and workshopping a story idea and produce a strong first draft at the end of the semester.

By starting out the creative process with these three principles in mind, I had a good position to begin shaping out my pitch ideas and my own expectations for what I wanted my thesis to be: not the next NBC hit or Netflix original series, but rather a piece of creative work reflective of my own experiences that would be a sort of test-run for my screenwriting faculties.

FACTORING IN FEEDBACK

Problem 1: Writing a Show vs. Writing My Life

While I was relatively more fortunate than most of my classmates when it came to getting regular inspiration and ideas for writing (after all, some of them were writing about vampire detectives and afterlife bureaucratic systems), a serious issue that I encountered pertained to my impulse to script my circumstances into my show. Being a resident at a co-op meant I basically started and ended my days in my show's universe which—while being a good place to ingest organic dialogue and observe the nuances of quotidian human drama—ultimately served as a handicap to my actual creative faculties.

It only took a few perceptive notes from classmates and a serious conversation with myself to raise the question if I was actually *creating* a narrative or merely *documenting* the ones around me. In this regard, I found there was a fine line between *inspiration* and *imitation*, and that more often than not in my writing, I was more inclined to look to my idea generating process for my next plot point or piece of dialogue rather than struggling to create drama in a creative manner. While I didn't think there was an inherent problem with using my personal experiences

as a root source for some of the elements of my pilot, I recognized that part of the screenwriting thesis process is developing a working understanding of storytelling and structure. By relying too much on anecdotal inspiration, I realized that I was depriving myself of the creative development that comes with the process of fleshing out a narrative.

Problem 2: A Matter of Character

After about a month-and-half of hasty draft work, I received my first round of comments from my classmates. While varying in degree and frequency (that is, how many of my classmates made the same comment) the below notes drove the majority of my rewriting process and helped frame my process for rethinking the show's structural elements.

1. What could be a more layered problem for Cooper?

In my outline, the driving action of the script centers on Cooper moving into the co-op and figuring out how to adjust to the eccentric environment while also trying to solve the group's problem relating to the health inspection. While this is a relatively straightforward and proven pilot format, my classmates noted that in the rough draft the action was too internal to Cooper and not sufficiently externalized enough. A solution they offered was to involve more of the secondary characters in Cooper's struggle and to build more conflict and background with each character. Some of the other co-ops that I had written were merely names on the page and didn't actually do anything, so using them to create more layered interactions (and therefore problems) for Cooper could raise the drama from a mere "bad move-in experience" to a more fully realized pilot story.

2. Who is the actual protagonist?

Who are the natural enemies of a small, scrappy, alternative, roguish housing community full of hippies? The elitist rich kids next door, of course. In creating Bernie, the stereotypical entitled rich kid, I neglected to keep the essence and disregard the clichés becoming of such an adversary. Many of my readers pointed out that Bernie served merely to provoke but not actually carry the antagonistic elements of the pilot, and that he could be more fleshed out and utilized to better realize the comedy of the pilot. Some of my classmates liked the idea of Bernie acting as a foil to the environment of the co-op, especially since it opens up a wider vein for contrast and conflict, but they noted that in the first few iterations of the script, he (and indeed many other characters) came across as one-dimension and flat. Making him a more hefty, concrete antagonist would in turn help setup my protagonist's personality and drive the pilot's story along.

3. It's too slow...speed it up!

In crafting my first draft, I neglected to abide strictly to the suggested page limit amounts for each script element. My teaser—or the opening sequence which is supposed to be less than five pages—centered too long on Cooper's car ride with his parents that stole precious page time that he could be spending at the co-op getting to know his new roommates and encountering the problem sooner. Besides the opening sequence, my classmates noted that in general, I could cut a lot of dialogue and scene setup since it only served to slow down the action, and that by embracing an economy of words I could keep the script fast, short, and sweet.

4. Don't overcomplicate it!

The last serious note I received pertained to my overextended storylines and complex narrative ideas. In the first submissions, I toyed with the idea of a giant house party, flashbacks, getting into trouble on the college campus, and many more disconnected trains of thought.

Professor McCreery encouraged me to not cheat on my original outline, to “stay good” and not go after new ideas, but rather struggle to make the old ones work and to do so in a new way. Instead of trying to layer in too many different scenes and developments, I realized I should really hone in on the co-op and Cooper’s relation to the show, since—in a word—my show was about living at a co-op and embracing a spirit of cooperation. The general solution to the problem of over-complication, I found, was to cut down the script even more. Professor McCreery offered some advice in this phase, saying that if I could cut something out and the story still worked, then that element was not necessary in the first place.

With all of these pieces of advice in place, I had a good foundation for re-evaluating my script and trimming the fat that was weighing down my story.

LESSONS IN LOS ANGELES

No One Wants a Swiss Army Knife

After completing the screenwriting thesis course and concluding the spring semester, I made the seventeen-hour drive from Austin to Hollywood (in reality, Burbank) to kick off my summer experience in the University of Texas Semester in Los Angeles, more commonly known as UTLA. The program, founded in the mid-2000s, is designed to enrich students’ understanding of the entertainment world through industry-specific coursework and internship experiences. While my fellow participants could be found in a variety of sectors like music, digital content, audience development, and advertising, most of us would find ourselves writing dozens of detailed reports on film and television submissions as coverage interns.

Before heading out to Tinseltown, I wrote down two specific goals I wanted to achieve before returning to Austin in the fall. First, I wanted to refine my understanding of the television development process (and therefore identify the strengths and weaknesses in my pilot script) in

my UTLA course as well as in a coverage internship (a position in which one creates a review of a film or television script according to an executive's rubric) at a production company. Second, I wanted to expose myself to the city's unmatched comedy community by enrolling in writing workshops and crash courses in joke writing. My hope for the latter is that I could elevate some of *Cooperative's* comedic elements to a higher level of excellence and better understand the toolkit of professional comedy writers.

One of the first lessons I learned that concerned television development came from Diana Kerew-Shaw, a two-time Emmy recipient and the creator of UTLA's "Development Process of Film and Television" course, which I was enrolled in for the summer. I remember that, during a conversation on wanting to tell (or sell) a story that's overly-complicated to the point of being misunderstood, she said:

"Make a decision at the beginning [of your development process] about what you want...no one wants to [buy] a Swiss Army Knife."

This note, while not directed specifically at me, caused me to return to *Cooperative* and seriously reconsider any elements that could cause it to be read as anything *but* a half-hour television comedy. At some points during my original development process of the pilot, I did lean on the possibility of writing the show as a *dramedy*, or dramatic comedy, since I could foresee some aspects of cooperative living being especially suited for more dramatic than comedic storylines.

Additionally, Diana introduced me to John Truby's "22 Steps" structure that detailed a list of elements inherent to good storytelling (like having a "problem," establishing a "desire line," and creating a "new equilibrium") and offered essential information for aspiring writers.

When I began redrafting my pilot, I listed each element and wrote what I thought my pilot contained that corresponded to that element. When I couldn't list something (for example, a concrete "opponent"), I was able to recognize the areas where my script had faults and could use improvement.

In my role as a coverage intern at Piller/Segan Productions in West Hollywood, my main responsibility involved processing television pilot submissions and giving detailed reports (known as coverage reports) on each script's genre, story structure, and its overall quality. Due to the sheer volume of submissions, coverage reports are separated into two simple stacks: scripts that are "passed" on, or rejected, and scripts that are "recommended," or the ones that will be forwarded to the development executives' desks.

As Diana suggested, the scripts I "passed" on usually did not afford strong understanding of what the story wanted to be. Many rejected scripts played too much with genre-blending while others simply failed to adhere to narrative structure. With respect to *Cooperative*, I realized that—contrary to some of my suspicions—being able to clearly identify elements of narrative structure (like Truby's "22 Steps") boosts the chances of a script moving from the "pass" stack to the coveted "recommend" pile. While I also covered hour-long drama submissions, the comedy scripts I read helped me acquire a sense of what makes for a good writing sample (though this was often accomplished by demonstrating what *not* to do, like relying solely on swear words for comedic effect or using physical comedy in a distracting manner).

Writing Workshops, Writing Weekends

While my class and work experience was allowing me to fulfill my goal of better understanding television development and the process by which I might improve *Cooperative*,

by mid-summer I began to shift towards my second goal: punching up the comedic elements in my script by enrolling in comedy workshops and weekends.

In the middle of writing a coverage report at the Whole Foods Market in Burbank, I came across an advertisement for a “comedy clinic” weekend with Jerry Corley, a veteran late-night television writer and stand-up coach. The ad—which for some reason seemed to me more legitimate than the legion of competitors that promised instant success and writing gigs—mentioned that weekend participants would master the “Comedy Material Generator” and the “13 Major Comedy Structures.” Without much reservation, I enrolled in the course.

Though much of the two-day workshop pertained to stand-up and late-night monologue writing, I did find that the advice intended for these two groups also applied to the humor I was wanting to inject into my own script. For example, one of Jerry’s first “nuggets” of advice was to focus on writing something true, not necessarily something “funny.” He likened comedy and joke-telling to a form of conversation and suggested that just as authenticity and truthfulness makes stories more compelling, so too can they punch up comedy when used in an organic way.

To help with creating a sense of truth, Jerry offered some generator ideas that combine a writer’s experiences with creative brainstorming. This was particularly useful to me since I had struggled significantly on where to draw the line between writing my life and writing a show. Three simple but useful techniques he offered were establishing “25 Random Lines,” “50 Facts ‘Bout Me,” and “Pet Peeves.” In the first technique, a writer creates twenty-five standalone pieces of dialogue that could be used as a sort of character calling card. Like Donna in *Parks and Recreation* and Liz from *30 Rock* expressing their character’s quirks in iconic lines such as “Treat. Yo. Self” and “I want to go to there,” my characters in *Cooperative* could be “punched up” by giving them seemingly random but deliberately funny lines. The Google Doc that I

established as Historian at Laurel would be especially useful here, with bizarre phrases like “Guard your bark,” and “C’mon...Ghosts!” being potential character-informing lines.

The second and third pieces of advice fall into a category of idea generating known simply as “listing.” Essentially, a writer makes a list of things—like fifty facts, government documents, pet peeves, and family trees—that give a character a backstory and help frame how they interact with other characters. Since I had not really done this for the major characters in my script, these suggestions gave me a foundation for returning to my pilot and adding some elements that would not only help me find some humorous inspiration, but also chart out some potential season-long storylines to explore.

During my last week in Los Angeles, I enrolled in a writing workshop intensive through The Second City, a nationwide improv and comedy troupe that has produced dozens of iconic television performers, including Tina Fey (*SNL*, *30 Rock*) Steve Carrell (*The Office*), and Amy Poehler (*SNL*, *Parks and Recreation*). The week long intensive, taught by talk-show producer Holly Wortell, would provide a writers room environment to refine comedy ideas and strengthen each participant’s joke-writing muscle. My intent was to connect with veteran television producers and writers and enhance my ability to better structure and format *Cooperative*, though I would be doing so through the lens of late-night television writing.

Holly inaugurated the class by discussing the subject of joke format and comedy structure, saying that “every show takes something that’s been done before,” but does so in a different way. She used the notion of “desk bits” in late-night that were introduced by Johnny Carson that have persisted into present-day talk-shows but in a multitude of formats, like Conan O’Brien’s “In the Year 2000” recurring bit and Jimmy Fallon’s “Pros/Cons.” Holly’s advice was to balance inspiration with imitation, and with respect to *Cooperative*, I realized that the kind of

“mockumentary” style I was modeling on shows like *Arrested Development*, *The Office*, and *Parks and Recreation* had not yet bloomed into its own sort of unique twist.

The most useful note I received at the intensive pertained to “evergreen material,” or comedy that doesn’t expire. Despite the evolution from proscenium style comedies (such as *The Big Bang Theory* and *Friends*) to contemporary single-camera productions (like *Curb Your Enthusiasm* and *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*), the elements that make a successful show have remained unchanged: humor that is rooted in human interaction on not on the spirit of the times. Regarding *Cooperative*, I began to think more attentively about whether the comedic elements in the show were too specific to cooperative living (and therefore only funny to me) or whether there was any “evergreen material” I could expand on and “punch up” to make the show more appealing from an audience perspective.

THE TIME TO COME

Remember: It’s a Writing Sample!

When the one-year mark passed since I first crafted the logline for the show, I took a moment to reflect on the original purpose and experiences that I wanted to have when I embarked on the journey to write a half-hour comedy pilot. In the writing process I often let myself get lost in the idea that I had to get my show to the point where it would be ready to “sell,” instead of remembering that, at best, it would be used as a writing sample to help me obtain work as a writer’s assistant or in a television network’s coverage writing department.

First, I remembered that this project’s roots were born from some the best times of my life as a resident at a truly unique place. Where else could I have expanded my notions about the world, experienced the joys of communal living (and occasionally, communal cooking), and begin negotiating my own wonderfully complicated path for the future? While the task of refining my

ideas and experiences into a television pilot were not always the easiest, I was always acutely aware of the fact that I was working on a “passion project” and not just any other college assignment or writing exercise project. Before coming into the thesis class, I knew that I wanted to simultaneously develop a project that I was excited about (and would actually want to watch myself) as well as actually produce a substantial piece of creative writing. At the end of the year, I had accomplished both goals, though I recognize that there is still a lot of room for improvement and even more refinement. Even though I grew to recognize the reality that *Cooperative* would—more likely-than-not—not be picked-up, produced, and premiered, I remembered that often the best television narratives are the results of an individual’s dedication to a particular story and his/her willingness to wait for the right moment to share it (like Judd Apatow and Paul Feig’s *Freaks and Geeks*).

Second, after finishing my first draft I reflected on the fact that—in combination with my summer in Los Angeles through the UTLA program—the screenwriting thesis program gave me a crash course on the ins-and-outs of the television development business that since have helped me shape post-graduation goals and opportunities. The ability to take the RTF 368S course as a junior (thanks to special approval from Professor McCreery) afforded me a unique opportunity to develop my series idea and launch into a transformational summer in Hollywood with a functional knowledge of scripted television storytelling. I am grateful to have rounded out my RTF coursework with a capstone experience in screenwriting, and consider it to be one of the most formational experiences I’ve had as a student at UT.

Lessons Learned

The original purpose of this screenwriting thesis was divided into two parts:

- A. To produce a piece of creative work reflective of my experiences living at a co-op

B. To better understand the development process of writing and editing television scripts

Having accomplished both of these parts, I can now reflect on some of the broader lessons I have gained from the thesis experience.

First, the value of a writers' room environment cannot be overemphasized. Especially since this was my first attempt at crafting a script from start to finish, I cannot imagine developing this idea in a vacuum. The input from my classmates and advisors was invaluable in helping me realize the strengths and weaknesses of my story and working to enhance it. Working in this sort of environment also helped me learn the language and nuances of the business, which helped me not only in Los Angeles during my UTLA experience but also as I have begun searching for fellowships and assistantships post-college.

Second, as introduced in the thesis course and emphasized in my summer experience, structure is important for many reasons, and it is not merely a bland use of formulaic storytelling. From a creative perspective, understanding the pillars of narrative storytelling assist the writer in placing certain elements in the script that lead to payoffs and problems throughout the episode and throughout the rest of the series; from a business perspective, having a clear structure indicates a writer's competency and makes the script more appealing to potential buyers and producers. While one could get away with augmenting the elements of structure, any script submission that defies it is almost certainly doomed for the "pass" pile.

Third, I learned that it is imperative that one make a clear distinction between imitation and inspiration, lest the creative process become merely an act of documenting instead of, well, creating. This has been one of the harder lessons to internalize, since often my gut instinct was to represent my reality on the page to spark interest, instead of struggling creatively to find a way to make it work another way. Having a journal was useful, but I think if I were to attempt to write

another script I would try to limit the amount of outside influence and really try to work from a solid outline alone. I am proud of my project as a sort of homage to a big part of my college experience, but I recognize that there are still areas where I could exercise more creative power.

In summary, this thesis experience—one lasting a little over one year—allowed me to walk away with a first draft of a television narrative, a refined understanding of the process for scripted development, and hands-on experience working in Los Angeles and the opportunity to see how the proverbial sausage is made. Overall, I'm very pleased with the strides my script and I have made over the past year, and though I recognize there's still a lot of work to be done with this story, I am more than ready and excited to see what stories lay ahead as I conclude my career at UT and begin writing the next chapter in my life.

COOPERATIVE

"PILOT"

07 MAY 2018

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FADE IN

EXT. COLLEGE NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

A rickety, single-cab farm truck lumbers down a city street crawling with people. In the middle of the front seat is COOPER CARPENTER (20s), wearing his "Sunday best" and holding his treasured TOOLSET. He's surrounded by his parents CLARA and ROLAND CARPENTER (50s), both wearing vacation clothes.

CLARA

Got everything, Cooper? We hate abandoning you on move-in day.

COOPER

(sarcastically)

Oh, I'm just so upset about it.

Clara notes the increasing speed the truck begins to move at.

CLARA

(to Roland)

Could you go any faster? It's not like we're trying to spend time with our only child or anything.

COOPER

I mean, I'm totally fine with getting out of--

ROLAND

(to Clara)

No can do! See these...*people*? Can't slow down around 'em...otherwise they'll encircle us. Like a group of communists in the dead of night...

COOPER

Dad, the Cold War's been over for years. And these aren't communists, they're *college students*.

ROLAND

And the difference is?

CLARA

Cooper we know you're going to do so well!

(to Roland)

Our son, the Honors Engineer!

COOPER

Mom, please, it's not a big deal--

ROLAND

Not a big deal?! Because of your full-ride we're gonna spend another week--2 weeks--in Cabo!

CLARA

We really banked on you getting a scholarship...you always had such a gift for going above and beyond...

FLASHBACK - COOPER'S CHILDHOOD

We see three flashback sequences illustrating Cooper's intense personality and his quirks.

- At a fifth-grade science fair, other students' lego and volcano projects are showed off with pride, but are totally eclipsed by Cooper's fully functional robotic arm.

- During a middle school piano recital, Cooper performs a rapturous sonata with gusto while simultaneously studying an advanced Calculus book alongside the sheet music.

- In high school, a teacher assigns class projects, and as the burnouts organize into their groups, Cooper immediately delegates tasks to each one: he's already got it figured out.

EXT. COLLEGE NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

COOPER

Well, I mean...if that's how you remember it.

ROLAND

We have no doubt you're gonna win the Heisman trophy of science ...whatever *that* is...but--

CLARA

We just want you to have fun! Go out and explore. It's Austin!

ROLAND

There's a lot of stuff down on 6th Street, if you know what I mean...

COOPER

Yeah.

(beat)

Willis Enterprises headquarters.

ROLAND

What?

COOPER

The most important engineering firm in the state? Founded by Waterloo's first billionaire? Bernard Willis?

ROLAND

Sure...

CLARA

Just make sure you get and meet people! And not just stay in your room all the time.

COOPER

Whatever.

CLARA

I'm sure there will be people who'd go out with you...maybe those other engineers at that event later.

COOPER

The *Engineer Premiere*? Have you ever met one of them? They're basically social neanderthals.

CLARA

Well, maybe there's people at the...what is it...apartment or dorm or something?

Cooper pulls out a sheet of paper with detailed information on it.

COOPER

A co-op. *Holly Haus Co-op.*

ROLAND

What is that again?

COOPER

Cooperative housing.

ROLAND
Right...cooperative housing...as
opposed to *uncooperative*
housing...like army barracks.

COOPER
Yeah, it was all that was
available. They do communal living
stuff, I don't know.

ROLAND
Communists.

COOPER
Yeah, not my first choice. I'd
rather be someplace--

They drive by an stunning mansion.

COOPER (CONT'D)
Like that! Pull over!

EXT. PALADINS CLUB - DAY

The truck comes to a halt in front of the mansion. Cooper
eyes the mansion's logo: a star-studded shield surrounded by
two sabers.

CLARA
(impressed)
Wow.

COOPER
(impressed)
Wow.

ROLAND
Eh.

COOPER
This is incredible!

The Carpenters exit. Outside, a GARDENER struggles to trim
down ivy branches that obscure the mailbox. Clara whips out a
camera, ready to capture the moment.

CLARA
You two go get together now!

Roland puts a hearty, hairy arm around Cooper. Cooper forces
out a smile. The gardener sees them in picture-ready pose.

CLARA (CONT'D)
One...Two...Thr--

GARDENER
Excuse me! No photography allowed!

The gardener points to a sign that has a camera with a red "X" on it. Cooper looks at the gardener quizzically.

COOPER
Oh, I'm just moving into the neighborhood.

GARDENER
Are you a Paladin?

COOPER
What?

GARDENER
Are you a member of the Paladin's Club?

He points to a sign that reads: Paladins Club, members Only.

COOPER
No, I'm not one of those.

GARDENER
Then I'm going to ask you to leave.

COOPER
Wait!

Cooper refers to his paper instructions.

COOPER (CONT'D)
Do you know where Holly Haus is?

The gardener points next door with his hedge-cutters, disgusted at the mention of Holly.

ROLAND
Let's check it out!

EXT. HOLLY HAUS - DAY

The compound is rough. Milk jugs adorn the roof; a washing machine is turned over; a half-mannequin guards the entrance.

COOPER
(disgusted)
Wow.

CLARA
(disgusted)
Wow.

ROLAND
(excited)
Wow!

END OF TEASER.

EXT. HOLLY HAUS CO-OP - DAY

Roland finishes stacking the last of Cooper's boxes on the sidewalk. He checks his watch and grimaces.

ROLAND
Well Coop, that's the last of 'em!
Tried to stack 'em as symmetrically
as I could.

Cooper examines his father's work. He is not impressed.

COOPER
Thanks, Dad.

ROLAND
Hon, we need to get going if we're
gonna catch our fight.

CLARA
(to Roland, hushed)
Are you seeing this mess? We can't
leave him here!

ROLAND
(to Clara)
Look, it's got character, maybe
he'll get some from living here!

Cooper examines the scene and takes a deep breath.

INT. HOLLY HAUS, HANGOUT ROOM - DAY

Through patchwork curtains, a group potheads watch the Carpenters. MOSES "MOZE" WALTHER (20s), examines them with a novelty telescope, taking hits from a joint intermittently.

MOZE
Ah. New people.
(beat)
I fuckin' hate new people.

Moze passes the joint to HELEN PARK (20s), a Korean hipster dressed in dark clothes and even darker makeup.

HELEN
You hate people period, Moze.

Seated next to her is ROBBIE LEE (30s), wearing only underwear as he takes wicked hits from a gravity bong. MOZE pulls out a clipboard with a roster on it.

MOZE
 (off clipboard)
 Robbie, you're checking-in new
 people, right?

ROBBIE
 (coughing)
 Checking-in and checking-out.

MOZE
 Then get off your ass and tell me
 if this is the new guy.

Robbie cross examines Cooper's face on the clipboard with a
 photo on the wall that reads: NEW MEMBERS. It's the only one.

ROBBIE
 Yep! I can tell because he looks
 like a *little bitch*.

HELEN
 (annoyed)
Bitch has been *reclaimed*.

Footsteps begin sounding up the stairwell. LIZ LOVEJOY, the
 queen of denim, emerges.

LIZ
 Afternoon, boy-o's.
 (beat)
 And Helen.

ROBBIE
 Were your ears burning?

LIZ
 About what?

He mouths "bitch" to Helen.

HELEN
 Forget it.

She sees Moze holding the telescope.

LIZ
 Looking for some dick, Ahab?

Moze huffs and shoves the telescope into her hands.

LIZ (CONT'D)
 What's up?

MOZE

New guy's here. Take a look.

She makes careful note of Cooper. She collapses the telescope into her pocket.

LIZ

Taking bets on how long he'll last?

MOZE

One week.

HELEN

One *night*.

ROBBIE

One *heleg*!

The gang looks at him, confused.

LIZ

What the heck is a *heleg*?

ROBBIE

3 & 1/2 seconds! Didn't you ever study Talmudic measurements?

LIZ

(dismissively)

Alright, time to get him. Whose coming?

Helen turns the TV on to a Korean SOAP OPERA.

HELEN

Busy.

LIZ

Robbie?

Robbie pops the waistband of his underwear against his skin.

ROBBIE

I'm a little under-dressed.

He scratches his crotch and takes a swig from a gallon of milk that was jammed between the cushions of the chair.

LIZ

Alrighty. You and me, Mozey.

The head downstairs.

I/E. HOLLY HAUS CO-OP - DAY

Cooper and Roland stare down Clara.

CLARA

(to Roland)

I just think we should meet these people. You know, to make sure they're not crazy.

COOPER

You honestly think people live here?

(he looks at his form)

This can't be the right place.

Inside, Moze and Liz prep before heading out to meet Cooper.

MOZE

Game plan?

LIZ

Just wing it. We're just a bunch of normies, right?

She sees the joint hanging out of his mouth.

LIZ (CONT'D)

Not now Willie.

She tosses the blunt.

MOZE

But it's a *perfect* roll!

Moze and Liz exit the co-op, donning forced smiles.

MOZE (CONT'D)

Hello! You must be our new member!

Back inside, Robbie and Helen watch the scene curiously.

COOPER

Uh, yeah...I'm Cooper.

MOZE

Moses. Moze for short, Director of Holly Haus. This is Elisabeth--

LIZ

Liz Lovejoy. Holly Historian.

MOZE

And you must be the parents! What a pleasure!

Moze shakes hands with Clara and Roland. Clara is pleasantly surprised by their normality.

CLARA

Oh it's just so nice to meet you!

ROLAND

(stoically)
Hi.

MOZE

We'd invite you in but we're busy...with stuff...will you be available later today?

Roland looks up and sees Helen and Robbie watching from the hangout room. Inside, Helen ducks.

HELEN

Shit! Get down. They'll see you!

ROBBIE

(unfazed)
Let 'em look.

He begins waving eagerly at Roland, who's deeply perturbed.

ROLAND

(under his breath)
Communists!

CLARA

Uh, well we--

ROLAND

Actually have to get going! Got a flight to catch!
(to Clara)
Clara.

CLARA

Ok, ok, ok!
(to Cooper)
Cooper!

COOPER

Yeah?

CLARA

You gonna be ok?

Cooper examines Holly, then the co-ops, then his parents.

COOPER

I hope so.

LIZ

Great! We'll get your stuff.

Liz and Moze gather up Cooper's boxes. Roland and Clara wave to Cooper as they get in the truck and drive away.

MOZE

Cooper, I think you're really going to make a fine addition to-

Moze's foot suddenly breaks through a wooden step, causing some of Cooper's stuff to spill out.

MOZE (CONT'D)

Crap. Third time this week.

INT. HOLLY HAUS, COMMON AREA - DAY

Cooper enters the compound and looks around. Posters of obscure bands hang and mismatched furniture fills the room. Exotic-looking people fill the room.

MOZE

Well...welcome home!

COOPER

This is...the living room?

DUSAN (O.S.)

Yes, but for you it will be living hell!

DUSAN (20s), a Serbian exchange student, eyes Cooper from a hammock suspended from the ceiling. Cooper is stunned.

LIZ

Cooper, meet the devil.

DUSAN

Liz, my favorite demon!

LIZ

Dusan, meet Cooper.

(to Cooper)

Don't mind him, he's just an angry Serbian.

DUSAN

You can just say Serbian. Welcome Cooper person. You want smoke?

He takes a drag from a blunt, and offers it to Cooper.

COOPER

No.

DUSAN

Fine!

(in Serbian)

Damn puritan.

Moze sets down some of Cooper's stuff.

MOZE

Liz! Why don't you give him a tour
while I check him in.

He sits down in front of a computer still running Windows XP.

LIZ

Right.

Liz and Cooper walk around the main room.

LIZ (CONT'D)

Part of my job is acclimating new
members to the house culture, which
can be daunting at first to
someone...like you.

Liz studies Cooper. He's a Sunday Schooler in Sin City.

LIZ (CONT'D)

Come check out the kitchen.

They head through saloon-style doors into a KITCHEN. Messy
pots and pans from weeks-old meals rest near the sinks.

COOPER

Uh. How long have those been out?

LIZ

Don't worry. They're
just...soaking.

DROPS of water fall on Cooper's head. He looks up and sees an
exposed and gradually LEAKING set of pipes.

LIZ (CONT'D)

(off Cooper's face)

How 'bout we check out the
backyard?

EXT. HOLLY HAUS BACKYARD - DAY

A dozen co-ops kick back outside the compound. DEREK CARTER, a country-hick type wearing boots and shorts, grills HOT DOGS and stirs a large jug of ICED TEA.

DEREK
Just in time Liz, food's ready!
(off Cooper)
Howdy! You the new guy?

COOPER
For now...

DEREK
Ah, welcome! Care for one?

Derek offers Cooper what appears to be a hot dog.

COOPER
(warming up)
Sure, thanks!

Derek hands Cooper a hot dog and glass of tea.

DEREK
(in a thick Texas accent)
Bon Appetite!

Cooper and Liz sit down at a covered picnic table. He takes a bite, but he's shocked by what he tastes.

COOPER
(disgusted)
What is this?

DEREK
Tempeh dogs!

Cooper examines his food closely and sees the fermented soybeans inside. To rinse out the taste, he takes a sip of the tea, but is equally disgusted.

COOPER
Is this sweet tea?

DEREK
Kombucha!

LIZ
Oh yeah, forgot to mention.
(beat)
Vegetarian co-op.

Cooper forces himself to take one more bite, but before he can, he feels something moving around his legs. He lifts the table cover and sees a GOAT staring straight at him.

COOPER

Ah!

LIZ

(off the goat)

Nugget! What are you doing here?

The goat bleats and runs off, Liz in pursuit.

LIZ (CONT'D)

Nugget!

Cooper seizes the opportunity to toss his food, but is confused by the waste bins: "compost," "light recyclables," "heavy recyclables," and a suspicious "other." No trash can.

Cooper moves over to a GARDEN PATCH and discretely empties his food into the dirt. He sees the backyard of the Paladins Club behind the fence.

KENNIE (O.S.)

Whatchu lookin at?

COOPER

Ah!

Cooper turns around and sees KENNIE TUFF (20s), a new-age, earthy type staring straight at him.

KENNIE

Sorry. Didn't mean to spook you.

(beat)

Could you get off the veggies?

Cooper sees he's standing on some plants.

COOPER

Yeah, sure.

KENNIE

You just move in?

COOPER

In the process.

KENNIE

Cool. I'm the Garden Gnome. Name's Kennie. They/them/theirs.

COOPER
Cooper. Uh, he/him...his?

KENNIE
Word.

Nugget approaches Cooper and nuzzles against his leg. Liz catches up.

KENNIE (CONT'D)
Looks like you're a nugget magnet.
A MagNugget.

LIZ
Huh? Nugget never likes new people this quickly.

She looks at Cooper with a muted interest.

COOPER
Nice...goat.
(to Liz)
Think my room's ready?

LIZ
Let's check it out.

INT. HOLLY HAUS COMMON AREAS - DAY

Moze swipes a piece of paper from an old-ass printer and computer. He examines it as Liz and Cooper wait next to him.

DUSAN
Incredible technology, reminds me of home.

Moze examines the paper.

MOZE
Cooper Carpenter. Room
216...roommates with...let's
see...Klaus Kroger!

DUSAN
Sranje, Klaus!?
(to Cooper)
Good luck.

COOPER
Wait, wait, wait, *roommates*? I
signed up for a single-room.

Moze hits the computer with his palm to refresh. No luck.

MOZE

As you can see this is a piece of
shit...so who knows. Maybe you did.
We'll figure this out later.

Helen runs down the staircase, furious.

HELEN

Moze!

MOZE

Geez, what?

HELEN

Did you forget to pay the internet
bill this month?

MOZE

No, payment's due on the twelfth.

Helen tosses a puppies/kittens calendar at him.

HELEN

It's the fifteenth, asswipe! I
can't get my show now!

Moze mouths the f-word.

MOZE

I'll call the internet company and
try to straighten it out.

LIZ

(to Helen)

In the meantime you can help us get
him moved upstairs.

Liz, Helen, and Cooper head up the stairs to:

INT. HOLLY HAUS, ROOM 216 - DAY

Liz and Helen lead Cooper into his room.

LIZ

After you.

Cooper reaches for the handle, but as he turns it comes off
the door frame completely.

HELEN

Get a grip dude.

LIZ
One second.

She contemplates the door momentarily, then kicks it open.

Cooper enters and examines a bed that looks like it just came back from a sanatorium.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Here we are, Room 216!

Cooper looks around the room in horror. He sees:

- Blinds bent up and hanging diagonally along windows covered in dust and dirt
- A tattered white bedspread on the floor covered in a brown substance
- A suspiciously large pile of garbage
- A can of Pringles jammed into the toilet
- A tiny German flag protruding from an electrical socket
- Dozens of liquor containers under the two twin-size beds
- A framed portrait of Joe Biden

Helen and Liz dump all of Cooper's boxes on the floor. His TOOLBOX spills open, and he's clearly pained by this.

COOPER
Careful! Some of these have my
engineering supplies.

He rushes over to check on the contents of his boxes.

COOPER (CONT'D)
(taking inventory)
There's my drafting triangle, my
AccuMaster caliper, oh, unanodized
aluminum breadboard!

LIZ
(confused)
Uh...ok...our bad. Anyways, you
good for now?

Cooper compares his neat boxes with the rest of the room.

COOPER
Not really! This place is a mess.
It's gonna take me forever to clean-

He gets an alert on his phone.

COOPER (CONT'D)
Shoot! My meeting's in twenty minutes! Do you know where the engineering building is?

ROBBIE (O.S.)
I do!

Robbie walks into Cooper's room, uninvited, and still in his underwear. He leans sensually on the door frame.

ROBBIE (CONT'D)
Used to be an engineering student back in the day...before--

He takes a swig from his milk jug.

COOPER
You graduated?

ROBBIE
(finishing his swig)
Got Suspended. Name's Robbie, Robert Elijah Lee.

COOPER
Wait...*Robert E. Lee*?

ROBBIE
Don't worry. I'm *Jewish*. But yeah, just call me *Robbie*. Or *Rabbi Robbie*. Or *Robot*, because I sold my soul to the devil.

LIZ
Dusan'll be happy about that.

Cooper looks concerned by this revelation.

ROBBIE
Kidding. Or am I? Anyways, I can take you in a bit, just let me get dressed.

HELEN
(sarcastically)
Really? No, you look great!

ROBBIE
Pshh, whatever. See you downstairs kid.

LIZ
 We'll let you get settled in.
 (beat)
 Don't worry. It does get better.

COOPER
 Really?

Liz smiles, and then exits abruptly.

Cooper walks around the room, examining Klaus's possessions. He sees a copy of Hamlet in German, and his Passport and ID. In the pile of trash, Cooper finds a pamphlet for the Engineer Premiere.

COOPER (CONT'D)
 What the heck?

He holds up the flyer. The date, time, and location of the event are circled, with a call for wait staff highlighted.

INT. HOLLY HAUS COMMON AREA - DAY

Liz, Moze, Helen, Derek, Nugget, Dusan and Kennie sit on the couch.

KENNIE
 At the next meeting we should take
 a vote on offering public yoga in
 the backyard.

HELEN
 You mean that new age goat yoga
 shit?

DUSAN
 No. Absolutely not.

KENNIE
 Why not.

DUSAN
 Someone might take my precious
 Nugget.

He cuddles Nugget, making goat noises.

KENNIE
 Aw c'mon, it'd be fun! We could
 offer couples sessions! Moze could
 even bring his Plus One around.

MOZE

Yeah...we're not seeing each other anymore...

DEREK

What? Why not?

MOZE

He hasn't come out to his dad about it...apparently it would affect his "inheritance."

DEREK

Damn.

MOZE

(evading)

Well, better check on that internet connection.

HELEN

(sarcastically)

No, really. Take your time.

Cooper begins making his way downstairs.

MOZE

Cooper! Want to join us?

COOPER

Got a meeting to go to, sorry. You seen Robbie around?

Robbie exits the kitchen saloon doors, wearing a smoking jacket and drinking straight from a new gallon of milk.

ROBBIE

Present.

LIZ

Please tell me you're wearing actual clothes under that?

ROBBIE

I like to let the mind wonder what it will...

(beat)

But the answer is *no*. Let's go Cooper!

He and Cooper exit the house. Robbie sees an exposed light bulb, and adds an empty jug of milk to the existing string. A feeble old woman, INSPECTOR DAVIS, walks up to them.

INSPECTOR DAVIS
 (to Robbie and Cooper)
 Excuse me, are either of you Moses
 Abner Walther?

ROBBIE
 (motioning to Cooper)
 He is! Just kidding. Why?

INSPECTOR DAVIS
 Don't you know? Today's your
 building inspection! I'm following
 up from last time.

COOPER
 Is something wrong?

INSPECTOR DAVIS
 Oh it's nothing new: leaky pipes,
 foundation issues, frog
 infestation...

ROBBIE
 (aside)
That's what crawled out of my wall
 last night!

Cooper winces. Liz and Moze emerge from inside.

MOZE
 Inspector Davis?!

INSPECTOR DAVIS
 Mr. Walther? I'm here for the
 inspection! Ready to get started?

LIZ
 (furiously to Moze)
 We have a building inspection?

Moze examines the calendar that was thrown at him earlier.

MOZE
 (skimming the calendar)
*Shit...*um, Inspector Davis! Is
 there anyway we could reschedule?

Liz shakes her head. Inspector Davis examines the calendar.
 She sees the cute animals inside.

INSPECTOR DAVIS
 How precious! Reminds me of Ms.
 McDouglas.

She pulls up a photo of a scrawny, mangy dog on her phone.

MOZE
(disgusted)
How...precious.

INSPECTOR DAVIS
Isn't she? Anyways, we can't
reschedule. The department
expedited today's inspection as
matter of fact...

MOZE
Expedited? But-

Inspector Davis examines her watch.

INSPECTOR DAVIS
So we're starting right...now! 3:00
sharp!

COOPER
What would happen if we failed the
inspection?

INSPECTOR DAVIS
Well, that's simple darling!
(beat)
The city would condemn the
property!

Moze, Liz, Cooper, and Robbie exchange worried looks.

END OF ACT I.

EXT. WATERLOO COLLEGE - DAY

Robbie confidently leads Cooper through the campus grounds of
WATERLOO COLLEGE. Cooper sees students moving into dorms.

ROBBIE
So, Honors Engineering! Must've
been a lucky ducky to get that!

COOPER
(distracted)
Yeah.
(beat)
Do you really think the city's
gonna shut down the co-op?

ROBBIE
Happened before. '94-'99. Whole
attic collapsed after we tried
installing a brewery upstairs. Man,
we got fined out the ass for that.

COOPER
You've been there since the
nineties?

ROBBIE
Yeah, since high school.

COOPER
You mean you're like...

ROBBIE
Thirty-five.

COOPER (CONT'D)
Thirty-five!

ROBBIE
Yeah...took a really long gap year.

COOPER
I don't have anywhere else to go,
Holly can't shut down! I haven't
even met my roommate!

ROBBIE
Klaus Kröger. Man, talk about a
weirdo. I know German people are
different but this guy is...

Robbie takes a swig from his gallon of milk. Families moving
in on campus look at him, perplexed. Robbie's hands twitch.

COOPER
Why are you drinking milk?

ROBBIE
Helps with my motor impairment.
Can't tie my shoes or wear pants
with zippers. But! Here we are.

EXT. ENGINEERING BUILDING - DAY

Cooper looks up at the towering brutalist homage.

COOPER
Thanks, Robb-

DEAN GOODLOE (O.S.)
Robert Elijah Lee!

An authoritative, stern-looking DEAN VALERIE J.L. GOODLOE stomps toward Robbie and Cooper.

ROBBIE

Dean Goodloe! What a pleasant surprise!

DEAN GOODLOE

You got *three* seconds to leave before I book you for violating your suspension.

ROBBIE

But I was just showing my friend Cooper the engineering building!

DEAN GOODLOE

Funny you know where to find it, considering missed *an entire semester's* worth of class.

ROBBIE

I was busy at my internship Dean Goodloe.

DEAN GOODLOE

Selling weed to teenagers on Family Day is *not* an internship.

ROBBIE

They looked old enough to me!

DEAN GOODLOE

You better move if you don't want me calling WCPD for...public indecency.

She examines Robbie's outfit.

ROBBIE

Gotta go, later Cooper...Dean Goodloe.

Robbie awkwardly runs away, but the wind catches his robe and blows it off of him. He stumbles away in his underwear and spills his milk on the way.

ROBBIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

My milk! No!

Freshmen students and their families look on the scene, very concerned and worried. A young child looks on in terror.

Dean Goodloe watches Robbie bumble down the road.

DEAN GOODLOE
Dummy. Can I help you, Cooper?

COOPER
I'm here for the *Engineer Premiere*.

DEAN GOODLOE
Oh really? Well, Congratulations.
That's a high honor. You might
actually thrive here--

She motions to Robbie, who's trying to scoop the milk back
into the jug in his bare underwear.

DEAN GOODLOE (CONT'D)
...as long as you stay away from
people like him.

COOPER
I'll see about that.

DEAN GOODLOE
C'mon, I'll show you inside.

INT. HOLLY HAUS COMMON AREA - DAY

Inspector Davis makes her way around the common room,
followed closely by Moze and Liz.

LIZ
Moze we cannot fail this inspection--

MOZE
We won't. Everything's
functional...mostly. There's just a
lot of small, little things..simple
fixes that--

LIZ
That you haven't bothered to do?

MOZE
I thought I had more time! I swear
this wasn't set for another month.

LIZ
Look, I know your break-up sucks,
but you gotta stay on top of your
job. You're in charge, Moze.

Inspector Davis taps a wooden beam with her ruler and jots
down some notes. Suddenly, a giant, splintering crack rips
down the beam, and dust falls from the ceiling.

INSPECTOR DAVIS
(calmly)
Oh my. Well that isn't right.

She jots down some more notes.

INSPECTOR DAVIS (CONT'D)
Shall we look at the kitchen?

Moze and Liz look at each other, worried. Derek, Kennie, Dusan, and Helen examine the crack. Dusan flicks his lighter on and off.

DUSAN
Do you want me to burn her? Easy
fix, no evidence.

DEREK
If only we had a repairman or
something living here.

KENNIE
Repairperson.

HELEN
Cooper had a shit ton of supplies
upstairs.

MOZE
Seriously? For what?

LIZ
Oh my God.

MOZE
What?

LIZ
The man's an engineer.

MOZE
We gotta get him.

LIZ
How? He's at that event? Last
person that saw him was--

Robbie suddenly bursts through the door, barely clothed and out of breath.

ROBBIE
Y'all! Milk!

Robbie runs to the kitchen, but is stopped at the door.

DEREK

Can't let the inspector see you in
your britches!

LIZ

Robbie! Listen! You gotta take me
to Cooper!

ROBBIE

But I was just with him! And Dean
Goodloe said--

LIZ

It's an emergency!

She notices his empty gallon of milk.

LIZ (CONT'D)

I'll buy you another one on the way
back.

Robbie perks up.

ROBBIE

Done!

LIZ

Soy though. Dairy's so bad for you.

ROBBIE

(pained)

Ugh...fine!

LIZ

(to Moze)

We'll be back.

Liz and Robbie leave. Moze eyes a cute animal magazine.

MOZE

Inspector Davis!

INT. ENGINEERING BUILDING, BANQUET HALL - DAY

Cooper and Dean Goodloe enter a banquet hall adorned with
cheap decorations, sad-looking professors and awkward-looking
engineering students.

DEAN GOODLOE

There's someone I want you to meet.

Dean Goodloe leads Cooper to an elite-looking coterie of men,
at the center is BERNARD WILLIS II. Cooper is starstruck.

COOPER

Is that-

DEAN GOODLOE

Chairman Willis! How are you?

BERNARD

Dean Goodloe, a pleasure to see you again!

DEAN GOODLOE

This is Cooper, one of our incoming honors engineers.

BERNARD

Is that so! Congratulations on it. You'll have to meet my son Bernie later, he's a sophomore engineer.

Bernard points to BERNIE, who's sitting at a table with a bunch of jock-like meatheads. Cooper is flabbergasted.

COOPER

Mr. Willis, I, uh...it's just an honor to meet you. I've followed your company for so long and-

BERNARD

That's nice of you to say, maybe one day you'll be working for me!

His phone starts to ring.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Oh, if you'll excuse me.

DEAN GOODLOE

Of course.

COOPER

It was nice to meet you sir!

BERNARD

Likewise, Cooter!

(into phone)

Elon! How goes the bidding war?

DEAN GOODLOE

Good to meet you Cooper.

She heads off as Cooper moves over to Bernie's table. On the way, Cooper examines the scores of waiters tending to the event, checking to see if any of them are Klaus. At the table, two frat-like guys, PJ and MAC, converse with Bernie.

PJ
(to Bernie)
You spent how long there again?

BERNIE
Two months. You really should join
me next time.

MAC
On the Riviera? A wuss's summer.
Try doing a walk-about in the
Tanami. Armed with nothing but a
knife and your wit.

Mac motions to his brain.

BERNIE
Doesn't sound like much at all.

Bernie and PJ laugh as Cooper approaches.

COOPER
Bernie?

BERNIE
That's me. Saw you talking to my
dad over there-

He spies Cooper's sticker name-tag.

BERNIE (CONT'D)
Cooper. C'mon, join us.

COOPER
Thanks!

Cooper sits. PJ and Mac examine him carefully.

BERNIE
Cooper. Meet PJ, Mac.

COOPER
Nice to meet y'all.

PJ pulls out a small vial of liquor. He cracks it open, chugs
it, and tosses it. He offers a second one to Cooper.

COOPER (CONT'D)
Oh no thanks.

A waiter approaches the table. His name tag reads "Hank," but
Cooper recognizes him immediately as Klaus, his roommate.

KLAUS
Hello, people--er, persons.

COOPER
(whispering)
Klaus?

Klaus looks surprised at Cooper, but points to his name tag.

KLAUS
Hank. Can I bring you some drinks?

MAC
Water, no lemon.

PJ
Why no lemon?

MAC
Allergies.

BERNIE
Who the hell's allergic to lemons?

BERNIE (CONT'D)
Sparkling water for me.

KLAUS
Heh?

BERNIE
It's like...I dunno...bubbly.

MAC
...and disgusting.

The waiter writes down "zwei Wassergläser."

KLAUS
(to Cooper)
And for you?

COOPER
I'm good.

KLAUS
No one said you were *bad*.

Klaus exits. The table quiets down to hear Dean Goodloe as she approaches a podium onstage.

DEAN GOODLOE
I'm very excited to welcome you all
to this year's *Engineer Premiere*.

Weak claps sound throughout the audience.

DEAN GOODLOE (CONT'D)
I hope you're enjoying the venue,
courtesy of Mr. Willis who'd like
to say a few words--

Wild, enthusiastic applause ensues from the audience. Willis
takes the stand, confident.

BERNARD
Thank you all very much. Waterloo
College is a special place to me.
It's where I planted the seeds of
Willis Enterprises, which over time
grew into what it is today: a multi-
billion dollar organization.

The audience applauds.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
But, I just want to congratulate
you all on the start of what I
expect will be phenomenal careers.
To all of you here today, never
hesitate to reach out to me if you
need help, and remember--

Bernard points to a Willis Enterprises banner.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
(reciting the school
motto)
W.C. Never Flees!

The crowd wildly applauds while BERNARD exits off stage.
Cooper scans his table mates and sees they're wearing pins
matching the crest of the Paladins Club.

COOPER
Where'd y'all get those pins?

MAC
We just got initia-

PJ
(aside)
Shut up!

BERNIE
Let's just say we worked hard to
earn them.

He leans in close to Cooper.

BERNIE (CONT'D)
You uh, interested in earning one too?

PJ
Bernie.

BERNIE
Relax, Coop here seems like a good guy. Might could use him.

COOPER
For what?

Bernie leans in.

BERNIE
You ever heard of the Paladins Club?

COOPER
I've seen it. Nice place.

BERNIE
Oldest society at Waterloo. My grandfather was a member. You gotta know someone...

PJ
Be a legacy...

MAC
Or be loaded...

BERNIE
Usually all three.

COOPER
I don't know anyone.

BERNIE
You know us. We got big plans ahead. You can be a part of them.

COOPER
What are you gonna do?

BERNIE
Gonna expand. Place next door to ours has had it coming for years.
(beat)
We're gonna buy it out.

COOPER
What place?

MAC
Holly Haus. Some dingy co-op. Full of freaks. Bern's father's gonna get a good deal for it.

PJ
Yeah tell him the plan Bernie!

BERNIE
Father's contacts at City Hall managed to send an inspector out ahead of schedule...a full month early...she's probably boarding up the place as we speak.
(beat)
Then we're gonna build this there.

He pulls out his phone and shows Cooper an image of a resort-like pool and bar area built on the Holly Haus lot.

BERNIE (CONT'D)
Paradiso Paladino.

Klaus returns to the table with two waters.

KLAUS
OK. Two *Wassers*.

BERNIE
Uh, the hell is this?. I ordered sparkling water.

KLAUS
Right. Wasser.

BERNIE
Sparkling water.

KLAUS
Oh. That's right. *Bubbly wasser.*

Klaus sticks a straw in the water and blows bubbles in it.

KLAUS (CONT'D)
There. *Bubbly Wasser.*

Bernie eyes Klaus, perturbed by his accent.

BERNIE
What kind of accent is that, *Hank*?

KLAUS
No accent. Unless you mean my
distinct Texas accent.

BERNIE
I do. Where you from?

KLAUS
(nervously)
Dallas.

Cooper watches carefully.

BERNIE
Where exactly?

KLAUS
Erm, Dallas...Cowboytown.

BERNIE
Oh yeah? City or suburb?

Klaus begins to get very nervous, Cooper sits up a bit.

KLAUS
I'm from...uh...

Just then, Liz and Robbie burst into the banquet hall. Liz whips out her telescope, scans the room, and finds Cooper.

LIZ
(yelling)
Cooper!

She also sees:

LIZ (CONT'D)
Klaus?

Klaus, startled, drops some of the drinks on Bernie.

BERNIE
What the hell! This is a \$1,200
blazer!

The Paladin initiates fly out of their seats. Cooper moves next to Klaus and is joined by Liz and Robbie. Dean Goodloe joins in the mix.

KLAUS
(surprised)
Liz? Robbie?

DEAN GOODLOE
(angrily)
Robbie?

ROBBIE
(frightened)
Dean Goodloe? Klaus?

LIZ
(rushed)
Cooper! We need you back at the co-op!

BERNIE
The co-op!?

KLAUS
(to Cooper)
Co-op? Wait, are you-

ROBBIE
Hey uh, now's not the best time to ask questions if you don't want me going back to the bucket.

COOPER
(to Liz and Robbie)
What are you doing here?

LIZ
We'll explain on the way!

Cooper, Klaus, Liz, and Robbie all rush out of the room. Dean Goodloe and Bernie's gang pursue them.

EXT. WATERLOO COLLEGE - EVENING

The co-op gang flees the scene, Robbie is still in his underwear. Again, concerned people look on.

KLAUS
(panting)
How did you know my name?

COOPER
You left your passport in the room back at Holly.

KLAUS
The room. *Our room?* We're
roommates?

COOPER
Believe me. I'm just as surprised.

KLAUS
(frustrated)
You mean I'm living with an
engineer? *Schiesse!* I left Germany
to get away from all the engineers!

COOPER
Well! What the heck do you study?

A beat.

KLAUS
Method Acting!

LIZ
Cooper! You a handyman? Know how to
use those tools?

COOPER
I mean, yeah, but what do you have
in mind?

The pursuers are nearly upon the co-ops. Robbie sees a
nearby bus turning onto Laurel Lane.

ROBBIE
Do you trust me?

	COOPER	LIZ
Maybe?		Hell no!

ROBBIE
That'll do!

Robbie leads them all towards the bus, where they leap onto
the back of the bus's frame and coast down the road. Bernie
takes out his phone to place a call.

BERNIE
Shit! It's soaked.

He tosses it to the ground. He sees PJ on his phone and grabs
it, punching in some numbers.

BERNIE (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Yeah. It's me. We have a problem.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOLLY HAUS COMMON AREA - EVENING

Moze and Inspector Davis sit on the couch and read *Cat Fancy*.

INSPECTOR DAVIS

Well Moses, this is great but I really need to inspect more.

MOZE

I'm sorry, time just got away from me with all this *kitten* around.

Inspector Davis keels over from laughing. Cooper, Klaus, Liz, and Robbie rush through the door. Moze walks up to them.

MOZE (CONT'D)

About time! The inspection's about to end and there's a lot of little stuff we need to fix.

LIZ

Enough to keep us from failing?

MOZE

Just barely.

He holds up her review sheet that he finessed from her while she cracked up. Cooper reviews it.

COOPER

Ok. We can totally do this...just give me a second.

Cooper rushes up to his room, grabs his 600-piece TOOLSET, and brings it downstairs. It looks like an accessory kit for James Bond. The gang looks on in wonder.

LIZ

Oh my God.

MOZE

What in the--

Helen comes downstairs, perturbed by Inspector Davis' laughter.

HELEN

Who the hell is cackling like a ferret?

Moze recruits Derek, Dusan, Helen and Kennie. Cooper gives tools to them just as Inspector Davis regains her composure.

MOZE

Just tell us what you need done.

Cooper focuses. He's in his element.

COOPER
OK. Listen closely...

MONTAGE - CO-OP CLEANING

Cooper leads the quick-fix and cleaning efforts, which are examined by Inspector Davis as soon as they are completed.

- Cooper shows LIZ how to use a sophisticated pipe wrench to adjust leaking valves throughout the house
- Dusan, Helen, and Derek rapidly install temporary screws in the wooden beams to keep them structurally secure.
- Moze, Klaus, and Kennie cover up some of the obvious foundation problems as Liz attempts to wrangle Nugget.
- Cooper attempts to teach Robbie how to hammer down a board to keep the frogs from coming out of the wall, but when Robbie's hand begins to shake and it looks like he might crush a frog instead of the nail, Cooper does it for him.
- As Inspector Davis is about to walk in front of a gaping hole in the wall, the group forms a shoulder-to-shoulder wall to cover it up.

INT. HOLLY HAUS COMMON AREA - LATER

Inspector Davis makes final notes on her iPad. She has no idea they've been working behind her back the entire time.

INSPECTOR DAVIS
Well, things here weren't great.

The gang takes a collective gulp.

INSPECTOR DAVIS (CONT'D)
But they weren't as bad as last time. Congratulations, you pass!

The gang exchanges high-fives.

MOZE
Thank you so much Inspector Davis!

INSPECTOR DAVIS
Don't get carried away. Repairs still need to be done but it's safe to live in until then.
(MORE)

INSPECTOR DAVIS (CONT'D)
In the meantime, I've got to get
home to Ms. McDouglles!

Inspector Davis leaves Holly Haus.

LIZ
Wow, Cooper. You really saved our
asses today.

KLAUS
How could he save our asses? Our
asses were not what needed saving.

ROBBIE
Klaus. Figure of speech.

MOZE
Cooper, I knew you'd come through.
And like I said...you're gonna make
a fine addition to the house.

Cooper takes the comment to heart, but remembers Bernie's
plan.

COOPER
Listen, Moze. There's something I
need to tell you--

HELEN (O.S.)
Hey, internet's back!

HELEN jumps onto the couch to catch the end of her show.

MOZE
(off Helen's show)
Dang! I really want to catch this,
tell me later?

Moze rushes off.

LIZ
What were you going to say?

Cooper looks concerned.

KLAUS
I'm going to head up to review my
acting manual. My waiter
impersonation was...subpar.

Moze and Helen lean back on the couch. Moze's phone vibrates.

HELEN
Who's that?

Moze's eyes scan the phone.

MOZE

No one.

He tosses it next to him, revealing a message from Bernie (whose name is surrounded by heart emojis): "Call ASAP."

END OF ACT II.

INT. HOLLY HAUS ROOM 216 - EVENING

Liz walks Cooper to his room.

LIZ

And Bernie just told you all of that?

COOPER

Yeah, before he figured out I was living here.

LIZ

Moze is gonna have a fit when he finds out.

COOPER

I figured, Bernie's an interesting character.

LIZ

And also Moze's ex.

COOPER

Seriously?

She nods.

LIZ

For now, don't tell too many people about the Paladin's plan.

COOPER

(sarcastically)

Should I start looking for a new place?

LIZ

In Austin? Good luck, smart ass.

They arrive outside Cooper's room.

LIZ (CONT'D)
 Anyway, thanks for your help today,
 you really did us a solid.
 (beat)
 Think you're gonna be ok?

COOPER
 I think so-

Cooper's phone rings with a call from Clara.

LIZ
 I'll let you take that, see you
 around, Coop.

Liz exits, Cooper answers.

COOPER
 Mom?

CLARA (V.O.)
 Hey sweetie! How was the first day?

COOPER
 Actually, not too bad. How's Cabo?

We intercut with Clara and Roland on Playa del Cabo. They're at a thriving beach party and young people are grinding on Roland in the background, much to his displeasure.

CLARA
 Your dad and I are doing great!
 Miss you though.

COOPER (O.S.)
 Miss y'all too.

Klaus's voice carries through the door and into the hallway where Cooper stands.

KLAUS (O.S.)
*Sein oder Nichtsein, das ist hier
 die Frage...*

CLARA (V.O.)
 Is that your roommate?

COOPER
 Yeah, Klaus.

CLARA
 Oh! Roommate Bonding! I'll let you
 get back to it son! We love you!
 You'll do great!

COOPER
Love you too, Mom.

He hangs up the phone and enters the room. Klaus is reciting the German translation of Hamlet.

KLAU
Hello? Oh it's just you.
(continuing)
*Ob's edler im Gemüt, die Pfeil' und
Schleudern...*

Cooper debates asking him about it, but instead collapses onto his bed. The room is still trashed and undecorated.

COOPER
I'm pooped.

KLAUS
You know the bathroom's right there?

COOPER
I'm tired, Klaus. Ready for bed.

KLAUS
I shall go to bed too, then.

Klaus leaps onto his bed and shatters one of the frame's legs when he lands on it. The mattress slides off onto the floor. He pulls the mattress cover with the brown stain over him.

KLAUS (CONT'D)
Good night.

COOPER
Night.

Cooper closes his eyes and we hear:

KLAUS
There's *schiesse* on this thing!

Cooper shakes his head, and we:

FADE TO BLACK.
END OF SHOW.

Brandon K. Curtis
 Professor Cindy McCreery
 RTF 368S Thesis Screenwriting
 1 February 2018

Cooperative — Pilot Bible

TITLE	<i>Cooperative</i>
CREATOR	Brandon K. Curtis
LOGLINE	After moving to the big city, a reserved small-towner struggles to navigate college life as a new member of Holly Haus, an international co-op community whose eccentric personalities keep it perpetually on the brink of chaos.
TAGLINES	<i>Your Cooperation is Appreciated.</i> <i>Not The College Experience You Remember... Or Want To.</i> <i>Small-town problems. Big City dreams.</i>
FORMAT	Half-hour comedy, single-camera
AUDIENCE	15-45 year-olds of all gender, national, political, and racial identities.
TONE	In the style of <i>30 Rock</i> and <i>Friends</i> , with the setting of <i>Animal House</i>
WORLD	Main setting is at Holly Haus, an off-campus cooperative for students at Waterloo College, a fictional liberal arts school in Austin, Texas. The time is set around the mid-2010s, an interesting era for the intersection of technology and culture. Significant locations in the series include: <u>Holly Haus</u> , a refurbished Victorian mansion (could use a renovation, though) where most of the main characters reside; <u>Beta Omicron Iota</u> , the lavish and influential fraternity in the same neighborhood as Holly; <u>Barleyville</u> , an organic grocery store that supplies Holly's food and serves as a meeting point for many character interactions; <u>BARb's</u> , a downtown dive bar that also serves as a meeting place and co-op hangout; <u>Homer Hall</u> , the main administrative building of Waterloo College; and <u>Schreiner, Texas</u> , the protagonist's rural hometown.
CHARACTERS	<u>Cooper Curtis</u> Main Character Small-town Texan; reserved, but desires

to build meaningful relationships with people he finds interesting or quirky; “suffers” from only-child syndrome to a small degree; isn’t “Type-A,” but demonstrates Type-A tendencies like carrying out long, random bursts of cleaning and maintaining exceptional organization; pretty sheltered due to his small-town upbringing, has never drank, smoked weed, virginal; fears include snakes and pickles; got into Waterloo after being on the admission waitlist for months, and studies film, somewhat to the chagrin of his parents, who want him to be financially stable; has a lot to learn from other people but a lot to offer them as well, like understanding, compassion, and a surprisingly funny personality

As the main character, Cooper’s story arc/growth will center on the experiences one has when being exposed to new, often controversial and in-your-face things. Sometimes it works out well, many times it does not. Cooper often will act as the glue that keeps the members of Holly Haus from destroying each other, and through him we get to see the best aspects of other characters.

Klaus von Müller | Supporting Character | one of Waterloo College’s four-year international students from Wurzburg, Germany | is Cooper’s eccentric roommate at Holly Haus (think Kramer from *Seinfeld* meets Tracy Jordan from *30 Rock*) | has a warm personality but is exceptionally scatterbrained and tragically unorganized; has a knack for studying engineering but he doesn’t enjoy it; has a repressed love and appreciation for poetry, he’s memorized the entirety of Tennyson’s *Ulysses*; enjoys drinking alcohol straight from the bottle and American dance forms; constantly misplacing all of his belongings; he isn’t particularly religious but routinely falls for deeply pious women

As the primary supporting character, Klaus is intended to act as a counterpart to Cooper’s innocence and timidity. He’s loud, he’s willing to experiment with new things, and he’s incredibly gregarious. However, he struggles with having serious relationships with women, and his arc/growth will revolve around his instinct to resolve uncomfortable situations with humor instead of seriousness.

Robert “Robby” Lee | Supporting Character | currently, a twenty-five-year-old Waterloo College drop-out new to living at Holly Haus; had a difficult home life growing up and found relief in doing and

selling drugs; was homeless for a year after being cut-off from his family | a good-natured person trying to make sense of the mismatched pieces of his life, wants to put the past aside but isn't confident in his ability to move on | is something of a math savant, and has demonstrates the social awkwardness that accompanies it | frequently gets in trouble at the co-op for drinking all of its milk, and is an expert when it comes to cereal (acquired during his stoner/burnout days) | his past experiences make him well connected with the underground scenes at Waterloo and Austin, knows many homeless people, drug dealers, and hipster bands

As the tertiary supporting character, Robby is meant to represent the character in most need of a supportive community. Like Cooper, he has a lot to offer other people, but sometimes his past life gets in the way of it, making the ability to feel connected to other people challenging. He has some minor mental/physical handicaps and opens up to letting people help him. His main arc/growth will center on moving on from his past and trying to make his future brighter.

Elizabeth “Liz” Lovejoy | Supporting Character | independent blogger and social justice activist; a native Austinite, she harbors an intense disdain towards corporations and the spawn they breed (like Bernie); initially hostile to Cooper because she perceives him to be from “Hickville”; she’s active in the local art scene and poetry venues; she’s lived at Holly Haus for the entirety of her Waterloo College career, and has served as its treasurer, meaning she knows about its troubled financial situation (which causes great tension between her and Moze); though she fits the bill of a stereotypical third-wave feminist and eco-warrior, she still wants to maintain her religious faith without compromising her social values (a secret that sometimes puts her internally at odds with those very close to her); she’s had bad relationships with men, and isn’t looking for one with anybody anytime soon...but meeting Cooper may change that.

As the quaternary supporting character, Liz is meant to encompass some of the core values people may have about “hippies” and social activists: brazen, very outspoken, sometimes harsh, uncompromising, but mostly, passionate about their causes. Liz is a multidimensional and capable female, she loathes traditional expectations for women and any semblance of the patriarchy (naturally, she despises Beta Omicron Iota). Her

arc/growth will center on her struggle to unify her social justice aims with her private faith, and her ability to make herself open to romantic love.

Moses “Moze” Walter | Supporting Character | The Director of Holly Haus; studies philosophy at Waterloo and is very confident that every decision he makes, even the small ones, are the absolute best and most correct ones; a California-born Texas-transplant, he’s maintained some of the typical beach-bum tropes like never wearing shoes and wearing button-up shirts unbuttoned; as Director, can be somewhat lazy in carrying out his daily tasks, but when disaster happens he’s right on the frontline; is publicly gay, but has a secret relationship with Bernie, the belligerent fraternity president, and struggles to maintain this confidentiality; his tenuous relationships with other house members makes his leadership role controversial, and at times, unbearable.

As a supporting character, Moze’s main role will be to provide a key source of conflict in the series’ first season, as he’s aware Holly Haus is at risk of being bought by Bernie’s father and turned into an elaborate Beta Omicron pool/bar lot. His conflicting relationship with Bernie will reach its apex, probably when he “outs” him in front of his father.

Ida Steinberger | Supporting Character | the wealthy daughter of a Swiss bank executive, she represents a different type of spoiled brat, one of the European variety; she’s extremely offput by the co-ops “low-brow” environment and labor requirements (she’s never mopped or washed dishes in her entire life) and is generally unpleasant for much of the first season; studies business at Waterloo because “why not?” and also because she has goals of being the first female executive at her father’s bank; her straightforward mindset makes her a key source of conflict within the co-op and especially with Liz; her beauty standards make her a key target of sorority recruiters, and she faces an important dilemma: leave to join a group of people exactly like her and lose her individuality, or stay with people who could maybe teach her something about life?

As a supporting character, Ida’s main role will be to serve as that rich kid who’s never had to be completely self-sufficient. She’s not inherently rude, but she hasn’t had enough life experience to open her up to the struggles of the lower classes. Her main arc/growth will be to recognize the value in

people who didn't grow up like she did, and will center on her struggle to decide whether to continue living at Holly or to join a sorority.

Bernard “Bernie” Willis III | Antagonist | President of the Beta Omicron Iota Fraternity; his father, Bernard Willis Jr., is a notorious hedge-fund manager; mainly responsible for harassing Holly Haus members by stealing property and disrupting their daily state of affairs; has a framed photograph of Martin Shkreli in his room; throws ragers on the regular; and covers up potentially-compromising secrets, which includes his relationship with Moz and his gay identity; Deeply motivated by his pursuit for power and wealth, which manifests itself in his treatment of women, individuals different than himself, and Waterloo College authority figures,

As the primary antagonist, Bernie's purpose will be to serve as the main source of conflict for our cast at Holly Haus. His arc/growth will revolve around his secret relationship with Moze and his inability to meet his conservative father's expectations. He might have some redeeming qualities, but at this point in the series, he's not meant to be liked by anyone. Maybe by Martin Shkreli.

Dr. Valerie J.L. Goodloe | the stern, stonefisted dean of Waterloo College; earned a D.Phil from the University of Oxford in comparative literature as a Rhodes Scholar, but was raised in a rough Eastside Austin neighborhood; as an African-American woman, she's experienced some of the toughest social circumstances and has had to repeatedly prove herself even in her position as dean; she appears cold on the outside, but is capable of sympathy and deeply cares for her students, but doesn't baby them, nor does she put up with nonsense from college donors like Bernie's father, with whom she's entered into an uneasy political alliance to secure scholarship funding for disenfranchised students; she's hesitant to be working with people who she views as morally flawed, but does so begrudgingly for the good of the school

As a shifting protagonist/antagonist, Dean Goodloe represents the authority figure that many young adults perceive to be rebelled against, but in actuality is an ally and unwavering advocate. Her arc/growth will revolve on the gradual opposition Bernie's father builds up against her to

replace her with a more “friendly” dean, and her struggle to maintain her position (hint: she’s fighting the patriarchy!)

Characters with Forthcoming Bios and Descriptions

1. “Sarge the Mailman” — neither a sargent nor a mailman, Sarge is a homeless man who serves as the main source of neighborhood gossip and news for members of Holly Haus
2. Clara and Roland Curtis — Cooper’s eccentric and very, very strange parents. Not quite liberal, definitely not conservative.
3. John Bass — an influential and well-connected drug kingpin, sells hard drugs to the fraternity and weed to the co-op, treats Robby like a prodigal son of sorts, who keeps returning to borrow rent money
4. Korean, European, and Brazilian Exchange Students — Holly Haus sponsors exchange students every semester from all over the world

THEMES

Main theme: learning to appreciating people for *who* they are rather than *what* (lesbian, rich, trans, differently-abled, republican) they are can be very challenging, but rewarding. Dismantling stereotypes about people based on their appearances/backgrounds takes time and a lot of effort, but makes for better human relationships and ultimately a more cooperative culture. College life in the time of modern technology, identity politics, and global instability makes growing up in the 21st even weirder than in the 1970s.

FORMULA

30 min episodes revolving around interpersonal conflicts. Mostly comedy, but there will be some serious issues considered that stem from contemporary conversations on social issues. In any given episode, expect to see:

- Cooper experiencing something completely foreign to him
- Main cast characters butting heads over petty things (drinking all the milk), and one serious thing (going bankrupt)
- A resolution to one of the above, but never both
- A tie-in somehow to the overall season arc (see below)

SEASON ARC

For the first season of *Cooperative*, the main challenge will be for the

residents of Holly Haus to get along with each other in relative harmony, accomplish their unique goals, and, when they eventually find out about the co-op's insolvency, to rally around saving the house from being bought out by Bernie's father. For an sixteen-episode season, expect the main narrative thread to unfold according to something like this:

EPISODE IDEAS	Episode 1 <i>Holly Haus</i> Cooper arrives at Holly Haus; meets house mates; learns about rivalry with Beta Omicron Iota
	Episode 2 <i>Sugar Daddy's Honeypot</i> Moze's secret relationship with Bernie is revealed, as well the co-op's bankruptcy. Bernie tells his father about it, and plans to turn it into a Beta funhouse begin.
	Episode 3 <i>Gone Phishing</i> Robby tries to cut himself off from John Bass, but gets sucked back into the underworld by accepting a lucrative "phishing" job
	Episode 4 <i>Prohibition</i> After being put on temporary probation by Dean Goodloe for misconduct, Bernie, in a fit of rage, steals the Holly Haus "gator" lawn ornament. Moze and Robby conspire to infiltrate the Beta mansion during a house party disguised as beer delivery people.
	Episode 5 <i>Alp-a Delta</i> Ida begins entertaining the idea of rushing a sorority, but butts heads with Liz because of its perceived complicity with the patriarchy.
	Episode 6 <i>Oktoberfest</i> Cooper takes Klaus and Robby home to Schreiner for Oktoberfest, an annual beer festival, where Klaus gets in trouble with law-enforcement for underage-drinking ("it's sixteen in Germany!")
	Episode 7 <i>The Bavarian Candidate</i> When Moze's rule as director reaches its boiling point, Klaus jokingly suggests he become house director, a motion that gains surprising ground.
	Episode 8 <i>Labor Holiday</i> Holly Haus' annual day of renovation

- Begins just before Christmas, but tensions rise when a Willis Co. construction crew begin breaking ground for Holly's demolition
- Episode 9 *All is Fair in Lovejoy War* | Liz begins an internship working for a prominent state representative, but soon finds out the political world is even nastier than the real one
- Episode 10 *What Doesn't Bend Breaks* | Holly Haus takes a spontaneous trip to Big Bend national park, but relationships are strained when Klaus drops the group's sole walkie-talkie off the edge of cliff, leaving them stranded as night approaches
- Episode 11 *Tenure Trouble* | Bernie, finally off of probation, begins attending classes again at Waterloo. Dean Goodloe comes under increased pressure by Bernie's father to do his bidding or face a steep drop in donation funds
- Episode 12 *Family Weekend* | Cooper's parents come up for family weekend at Waterloo and stay with him at Holly, where he does his best to keep the rest of his roommates from making a bad impression
- Episode 13 *The Sidewinder* | Robby convinces the minors at Holly to get fake IDs and takes them to BARb's, but his bad relationship with the club's resident gang leader, known as "The Sidewinder" force the group across the downtown nightscape in an effort to help free Robby of his debt.
- Episode 14 *Spring Break* | Cooper, not wanting to join the rest of the house on a spring break beach trip, takes it upon himself to watch the house...with Liz.
- Episode 15 *Olive Street Olympics* | In an effort to delay Bernie's father from making the final decision to purchase the Holly Property, Moze convinces Bernie to participate in a "friendly" tournament between Beta and Holly House.
- Episode 16 *In Escrow* | Holly Haus stages a protest at Bernie's father's

office, and just as the inks about to dry on the contract, Moze makes a stunning confession about Bernie...in front of his father. Will it be enough to halt the deal?

PILOT

Premise pilot | *Episode 1: Holly Haus* | 40-50min episode, though others will run only 30 minutes.

Cooperative — Written by Brandon K. Curtis — Pilot Structure and TreatmentTEASER

It's 5:00 in Austin, and Cooper Curtis, a quiet, Type-A incoming freshman at Waterloo College and his parents, are experiencing the pain of navigating rush hour. As they drive through the off-campus neighborhood where lavish Greek mansions abound, Cooper feels a sense of dread at moving to his new cooperative, Holly Haus, the only place with an available room (that he could afford). We see Cooper step out from his parent's farm truck, and gaze upon the dilapidated victorian mansion-turned-commune...it doesn't look anything like it did online. Getting adjusted here is going to take some time...and a lot of effort.

ACT ONE

1. Cooper and his parents move his neatly-packed boxes into his room, which was left trashed by its previous occupant. His parents leave him to "break it in," and for the first time in his life, Cooper is finally alone. He begins cleaning up the giant mess when, under what appeared to be a pile of garbage, his roommate Klaus awakens from a drunken slumber.
2. Klaus, motivated by his hangover/hunger pangs, convinces Cooper to check out the kitchen in search of food. They meet the Holly Haus director, Moze, who is frantic about the pending building/kitchen inspection. He enlists Cooper and Klaus to help prepare, and they set out with the impossible task of making the house look "livable."
3. Cooper thought his room was bad, but his task shows him how filthy the house truly is. There's spoiled kombucha left under tables, turned over weed plants in the kitchen cabinets, and newspapers used as insulation/stuffing in the couches and walls. Klaus, in an attempt to help tidy up the kitchen, inadvertently breaks a string of lightbulbs in the kitchen, forcing Cooper to find replacement bulbs somewhere in the house.

ACT TWO

1. Cooper goes door-to-door throughout the co-op, meeting his new neighbors in an attempt to find light bulbs. He meets most of the characters, like Robby, a 30-yr old stoner/burnout and Sun, one of the Korean exchange students. The last person he meets, Liz, directs him to the "Shit Shack" where random house items and contraband are stored. While Cooper's away, Klaus continues goofing around in the kitchen.
2. Cooper heads outside and runs into Bernie, the president of the Beta Omicron Iota fraternity, whose loitering near the Shit Shack. The two talk, and Bernie comes off as a

d-bag. Cooper hurries to find the light bulbs, and heads back to the kitchen.

3. Cooper, Moze, and Klaus install the new bulbs and make the last adjustments just as the inspector arrives. She gives a kind of “been here done that” look, checks off on the house as “good enough,” and leaves. A pile of trash bursts out from a cabinet as she leaves...Klaus did it. The three characters breathe a collective sigh of relief. The house looks better, but a polished turd is still a turd in Cooper’s mind.

TAG

1. Cooper and Klaus head back to their room, but since Cooper’s so tired from cleaning up the house, he falls asleep on the floor with trash around him. We get the feeling that even though being in a co-op is completely alien to him, the people around him will make it worthwhile. Outside, Moze heads outside and aggressively asks Bernie what he’s doing there. Bernie plays it cool, but Moze is upset he’s on “his turf.” We think they’re going to fight, but they actually romantically embrace, and head into the Shit Shack together.

TREATMENT

LOGLINE After moving to the big city, a reserved small-towner struggles to navigate college life as a member of Holly Haus, an international co-op community whose eccentric personalities keep it perpetually on the brink of chaos.

WORLD Main setting is at Holly Haus, an off-campus cooperative for students of Waterloo College, a fictional liberal arts school in Austin, Texas.

CHARACTERS Cooper Curtis | Main Character | Small-town Texan; reserved, but desires to build meaningful relationships with people different than him

Klaus von Müller | Supporting Character | Cooper’s foreign roommate at Holly (think Kramer from *Seinfeld* meets Tracy Jordan from *30 Rock*)

Moses “Moze” Walter | Supporting Character | The Director of Holly Haus; confident that every decision he makes are the absolute best

Bernard “Bernie” Willis III | Antagonist | President of the Beta Omicron Iota Fraternity; mainly responsible for harassing Holly Haus members

PILOT **S1:E1** *Health Inspection*

Opening Image / World Set-Up

The episode opens on a rusty pick-up truck (think: 1950s Chevy Apache) driving down a bumper-to-bumper interstate. It's 5:00pm in Austin, and our small-town subjects, Cooper Curtis and his parents, have never experienced anything like it. We learn that Cooper's an incoming freshman at Waterloo College, and that his late offer of admission meant most of his housing choices were already full. Instead of moving into a brand new state-of-the-art dorm with a pool and luxury accommodations, Cooper and his family are heading to Holly Haus, an off-campus housing cooperative...a last resort of sorts. As they drive through the campus neighborhood, Cooper's family is awestruck by the elaborate Beta Omicron Iota mansion that's just down the street from Holly. An elaborate back-to-school block party is being thrown, drawing Cooper's curiosity. Cooper's father teases him about being accepted late (which eliminated his chance at living at a place like Beta) and his major (film) while his mother chirps out survival skills for cooking and laundry like a machine-gun. We can tell he's anxious to get away from them.

Theme Stated

Cooper arrives at Holly, a victorian-estate-turned-commune, and is shocked by its messy disorder. His neatly packed move-in boxes seem out of place compared to the rest of the scene. Cooper's parents leave him to settle into his room for the first time...alone. He's never been on his own (even as an only child), and it seems like he's on another planet. In his room, under a pile of what he assumed was garbage, his roommate, Klaus, awakens from a drunken slumber.

Catalyst / Goal Set

Klaus introduces himself to Cooper. It becomes clear that they're as opposite as night and day. Cooper's neatness and type-A appearance starkly contrasts with Klaus erraticism and chaotic personality. They decide to visit the kitchen to find something to eat, and meet the House Director, Moze, who's in a panic because the health inspector is about to conduct a visit to the Holly kitchen, which is beyond deplorable. He enlists Cooper and Klaus to help clean it.

Fun and Games / Obstacles Encountered

Cooper and Klaus get to work cleaning the Holly Kitchen. Cooper, who's never been in a place so disorderly is shocked by the things he finds while cleaning: a dusty, unrefrigerated bottle of kombucha (who knows how long its been there), a clump of regrettably used hairnets and gloves (please be gloves and not something else), and other putrid refuse. Klaus, keeping a positive attitude, makes obscure references to his life in Germany while working.

More Twists

Moze discovers that the walk-in freezer light is busted, and gets Cooper to ask around the house to find a replacement. Cooper meets the rest of his major roommates, including Liz, Ida, and Robby. Robby tells Cooper that the lightbulbs are in the storage shed, because he saw them in there as he was smoking pot, where Cooper goes and recognizes Bernie, the president of Beta

that he saw while driving by, idling mysteriously outside of Holly. Cooper eventually gets past Bernie and retrieves the light while enduring his aggressive and dismissive attitude

Resolution!

The kitchen isn't great but it's as good as it will get. Cooper replaces the walk-in light, and the health inspector gives the house a B-: passing. After she leaves, a cabinet behind Klaus spills open and junk pours out. Cooper laughs, because even though this place isn't what he expected it would be (clean, organized, a *mansion*) the people seem like they'll make his stay worthwhile.

Tag

After the health inspection, Moze steps away from the group to see Bernie outside. They seem initially hostile towards each other, with Moze asking him what he's doing. Bernie acts aggressively towards Moze, and they surprise us by romantically embracing in the shed. Clearly, the relationship between the two will have an important role to play throughout the season.

Cooperative — Treatment and Pilot Beat Sheet (?)

CREATOR	Brandon K. Curtis
LOGLINE	After moving to the big city, a reserved small-towner struggles to navigate college life as a member of Holly Haus, an international co-op community whose eccentric personalities keep it perpetually on the brink of chaos.
WORLD	Main setting is at Holly Haus, an off-campus cooperative for students at Waterloo College, a fictional liberal arts school in Austin, Texas.
CHARACTERS	<p><u>Cooper Curtis</u> Main Character Small-town Texan; reserved, but desires to build meaningful relationships with people different than him</p> <p><u>Klaus von Müller</u> Supporting Character Cooper's foreign roommate at Holly (think Kramer from <i>Seinfeld</i> meets Tracy Jordan from <i>30 Rock</i>)</p> <p><u>Moses "Moze" Walter</u> Supporting Character The Director of Holly Haus; confident that every decision he makes are the absolute best</p> <p><u>Bernard "Bernie" Willis III</u> Antagonist President of the Beta Omicron Iota Fraternity; mainly responsible for harassing Holly Haus members</p>

PILOT

Opening Image / World Set-Up

The episode opens on a dated pick-up truck (think: Chevy Apache) driving down a bumper-to-bumper interstate. It's 5:00pm in Austin, and our small-town subjects, Cooper Curtis and his parents, have never experienced anything like it. We learn during the car ride scene that Cooper's an incoming freshman at Waterloo College, and that his late offer of admission meant most of his housing choices were already full. Instead of moving into a brand new state-of-the-art dorm with a pool and luxury accommodations, Cooper and his family are heading to Holly Haus, an off-campus housing cooperative. As they drive through the campus neighborhood, Cooper's family is awestruck by the elaborate Beta Omicron Iota mansion that's just down the street from Holly. An elaborate back-to-school block party is being thrown, drawing Cooper's curiosity. Cooper's father teases him about being accepted late (which eliminated his chance at living at a place like Beta) and his major (film) while his mother chirps out survival skills for cooking and laundry like a machine-gun. He's glad to be getting out of the house.

Theme Stated

Cooper arrives at Holly, a victorian-estate-turned-commune, and is shocked by its messiness and disorder. His neatly packed move-in boxes seem out of place when compared to the rest of the scene. Cooper's parents leave him to settle into his room for the first time...alone. It's his first time being on his own, and it seems like he's on another planet. In the room, under a pile of what he assumed to be garbage, his roommate, Klaus, awakens from a drunken slumber.

Catalyst / Goal Set

Klaus introduces himself to Cooper. It becomes clear that they're as opposite as night and day. Cooper's neatness and type-A appearance starkly contrasts with Klaus erraticism and attraction to chaos. They decide to visit the kitchen to find something to eat, and meet the House Director, Moze, who's in a panic because the health inspector is about to conduct a visit to the Holly kitchen, which is is filthy. He enlists Cooper and Klaus to help clean it.

Fun and Games / Obstacles Encountered

Cooper and Klaus get to work cleaning the Holly Kitchen. Cooper, who's never been in a place so disorderly is shocked by the things he finds while cleaning: a unrefrigerated bottle of kombucha under a pantry, a clump of regrettably used hairnets, and other putrid refuse. Klaus, keeping a positive attitude, makes obscure references to his life in Germany.

More Twists

Moze discovers that the walk-in freezer light is busted, and gets Cooper to ask around the house to find a replacement. Cooper meets the rest of his major roommates, including Liz, Ida, and Robby. They tell Cooper that the lightbulbs are in the storage shed, where he goes and encounters Bernie, the president of Beta, idling outside of Holly. Cooper eventually gets past Bernie and retrieves the light while enduring his aggressive and dismissive attitude

Resolution!

The kitchen isn't great but it's as good as it will get. The health inspector conducts her duties, giving the house a B-: passing. Just as she leaves, a cabinet behind Klaus spills open and junk avalanches out. Cooper laughs, because even though this place isn't what he expected it would be (clean, organized, a *mansion*) the people seem like they'll make it worthwhile.

Tag

After the health inspection, Moze steps away from the celebrating group to see Bernie outside. They seem initially hostile towards each other, with Moze asking him what he's doing on his turf. Bernie plays aggressively towards Moze, and they surprise us by romantically embracing in secret. Clearly, the relationship between the two will have an important role to play in the rest of the season.

AUTHOR BIO

Brandon Kiev Curtis was born in Harlingen, Texas but spent his early years growing up in Kerrville, Texas. After graduating from Tivy High School in 2015, he attended The University of Texas at Austin as a Plan II Honors, English, and Radio-Television-Film major, and pursued additional credentials in creative writing, philosophy, and business and public policy.

At UT, he served in a variety of campus organizations including the Plan II Students' Association, the Plan II KIPP Partnership, the Nocturnal Literary Review, and the UT Student Conduct Board. In the summer before his junior year, he studied English literature at Wadham College, Oxford through UT English's Department, and worked in Hollywood the following summer in the Moody College of Communication's Semester in Los Angeles Program (UTLA). He was also a member of the final class of Senior Fellows (now Moody Honors), a *King Richard III* performer for the 49th Season of Shakespeare at Winedale, and a student receptionist at the Joynes Reading Room for four years.

Beyond UT, he held various internships and work positions at iconic Austin businesses such as Rip Esselstyn's Engine 2 brand at Whole Foods Market, Texas Monthly, and Austin Film Festival. As a two-year member of the Laurel House Co-op in UT's West Campus neighborhood, he served as house historian and assisted in expanding the house's culture through visual storytelling and preservation. In 2018, he was voted "Most Cooperative Member" for his contributions to College Houses, Inc.

After UT, he plans to pursue a career in content production or scripted television development, either on the east coast of the United States or in Western Europe. Though not in his immediate future, graduate programs in drama or literature interest him, but his primary focus is to bring a considerable degree of work experience and life perspective to his future academic pursuits. Immediately following graduation, he hopes to travel for the first time to Germany, France, and Spain, visiting old friends from his time at the co-op while making new ones along the way.

MISCELLANY

World Literature Professor:	Dr. Karen Grumberg
Tutorial Course Professors:	Dr. Janet M. Davis, Dr. Keith C. Brown, Dr. Austin Bay
Favorite Course(s) at UT:	E 321P – Shakespeare at Winedale (Loehlin) TC 302 – American Animals: A Cultural History (Davis) RTF 333 – Introduction to Screenwriting (McCreery)
Favorite Text Read at UT:	<i>The Norton Anthology of Drama</i> . Third Edition.
Favorite TV Show Watched at UT:	<i>Game of Thrones</i>
Favorite Coffee Shop in Austin:	Mozart's Coffee Roasters
Favorite Spot on Campus:	Front Desk, Joynes Reading Room